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AUTHOR Salopek, Phillip A.; Vanderpool, Christopher K.
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ABSTRACT

Replicating the work of others who hypothesized that status inconsistancy increases political liberalism, this study involved a random sample of rural Michigan population. Utilizing multiple regression analysis, respondents were scored on the variables of occupation, income, education, religion, and political party preference. Hypotheses tested were: (1) political liberalism is inversely related to achieved socioeconomic status; (2) controlling for additive effects of achieved statuses on political liberalism, status inconsistent individuals are more liberal than status consistent people; (3) and (4) controlling for additive effects of achieved statuses, respondents with high educational investments but low rewards tend to be politically liberal, while those with high rewards tend to be conservative; (5) controlling for additive effects of achieved socioeconomic statuses, Catholics are more liberal than non-Catholics; (6) and (7) controlling for additive effects of achieved statuses and of religion, Catholics of high achieved status are more liberal than other Catholics, while Protestants of low achieved status are more liberal than other Protestants. No association was found between liberalism and status imbalance, but it was suggested that theory substantiation might demand more adequate theory specification and consideration of social psychological and social structural issues. (Author/JC)

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STATUS INCONSISTENCY IN RURAL AREAS:

A REPLICATION AND CRITIQUE

Phillip A. Salopek and Christopher K. Vanderpool

Michigan State University

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ABSTRACT

Lenski's original study of status inconsistency was based on a sample of urban Detroit. This study extends Lenski's work by testing the theory of status inconsistency in the rural areas of the same state. The method employed in the analysis represents a virtual replication of one of the more recent research reports in this field. No association is found between Democratic party preference and status imbalances. Rather than concluding that status inconsistency should be dropped as an explanation of political attitudes and behavior, it is suggested that the primary factor responsible for the inability of researchers to substantiate the theory is its vague and incomplete conceptualization. A more adequate specification of the theory is possible by considering a set of social psychological and social structural issues.

STATUS INCONSISTENCY: AN OVERVIEW

The concept of a multidimensional status system originated with Max Weber's classical essay, "Class, Status, Party" (1946). Prior to the availability of a translation of this seminal theoretical formulation, the dominant theories of social status in the United States were unidimensional (e.g., Warner and Lunt, 1941). In contradistinction to viewing individuals as ranked on a single scale of status attributes, Weber pointed to a number of components which determined an individual's status in a stratification system. Subsequently, sociologists began to hypothesize that each status component formed its own hierarchy. Persons in the stratification system hold different rankings on the various status scales and their overall status is a composite of the relevant hierarchies. Such coexisting hierarchies form a multidimensional status system and offer a more extensive explanation of how status ranking is determined than the unidimensional formulations.

As a multidimensional system of status was developed, the possibility of contrasting ranks on the various hierarchies became evident. The behavioral consequences of consistency and inconsistency in status ranking emerged as a focal point of research on stratification.

Hughes (1945) outlined the form which various status discrepancies might take, while Benoit-Smullyan (1944) hypothesized that such discrepancies can result in revolutionary political behavior if attempts to resolve the inconsistencies are hindered. The status equilibration hypothesis (Benoit-Smullyan, 1944; Fenchel et al, 1951) has since played a major role in the development of the theory of status inconsistency.

Subsequent works have been based on the notion of an equilibrium effect which operates to keep an individual's rankings at a comparable level. Theoretical and empirical research has stressed that there are a number of statuses in any social system on which an individual is ranked. Status ranks are weighted according to their importance in society. Overall status in the stratification system is a combination of the relevant rankings and weights. If the status ranks are similar, a consistent status configuration emerges. However, if there is an incongruence in status ranks, i.e.,high ranking on some of the hierarchies and low ranking on others, an inconsistent status configuration is present (Lenski, 1954).

The basic assumption of the status inconsistency theory is that consistent ranks are stable, but inconsistent ranks are not. Incongruent ranks produce a state of tension within the individual which is not resolved until the status ranks become consistent. However, such consistency may not emerge. The form that such status tension might take varies: revolution, mobility, isolation, political liberalism, or right-wing extremism. The specific type of status tension that occurs in any particular instance of status inconsistency has not been determined. Nor does the theory posit the avenues through which balances of status ranks are achieved.

In spite of these major theoretical gaps in the theory of status inconsistency, the relationship of status discrepancy to a range of dependent variables has been widely researched. Status inconsistency has been linked to performance in small groups (Adams, 1953), social participation (Lenski, 1956b), preferance for change in power distribution

(Goffman, 1957), symptoms of stress (Jackson, 1962), distributive justice violations (Berger et al, 1972), the conflict propensities of nation-states (East, 1969; Galtung, 1964; Vanderpool, 1972; Wallace, 1973); various political variables (Olsen and Tully, 1972); and other variables that are considered to be empirically and theoretically relevant (Jackson and Curtis, 1972).

The behavioral consequence most frequently related to status inconsistency is political behavior. In his pioneering effort, Lenski (1954) found that individuals who were status discrepant had political orientations characterized by political liberalism. His findings, however, have been difficult to replicate (Kenkel, 1956). There are methodological differences between the first Lenski article and Kenkel's analysis which may account for their differing results (Lenski, 1956a), but subsequent research fails to settle the issue. A number of researchers claim that status discrepant individuals are more liberal (Geschwender, 1962; Lenski, 1956b, 1967; Segal and Knoke, 1968; Segal, 1969), while others find no such relationship (Brandmeyer, 1965; Broom and Jones, 1970; Jackson and Curtis, 1972; Kelly and Chambliss, 1966; Olsen and Tully, 1972; Runciman and Bagley, 1969). Moreover, in light of the failure to substantiate Lenski's initial findings, some sociologists have suggested that social class is a better predictor of various dependent variables than status inconsistency, although this issue has also been disputed (Bauman, 1968; Fauman, 1968).

Lenski's finding in his two earliest reports (1954; 1956b) that certain patterns of inconsistency are more closely associated with liberalism than others, e.g., persons having a low ethnic status in conjunction with high rankings on one of the other scales are the most liberal subgroups in his sample, provides another domain of investigation

that has been pursued in the literature. Some researchers report that different patterns of inconsistency are important (Bauman, 1968; Broom and Jones, 1970; Fauman, 1968; Geschwender, 1968; Jackson, 1962; Lenski, 1956b, 1967). Others, however, found that status indicators such as occupation (Hyman, 1967; Segal et al, 1970) or ethnicity (Schweiker, 1968; Treiman, 1966) account for much of the variance in behavior and that there is no inconsistency effect over and above that effect exerted by the status indicators themselves.

A crucial area of emphasis along these lines has been research dealing with discrepancies between achieved and ascribed status characteristics. Even though this form of discrepancy has been found to produce significant results (Broom and Jones, 1970; Chambliss and Steele, 1966; Geschwender, 1967; Goffman, 1959; Jackson, 1962; Jackson and Burke, 1965; Leavy, 1970; Lenski, 1967; Schweiker, 1968; Segal, 1969), there are no conclusive studies testifying to the fact that whenever achieved and ascribed statuses are incongruent, significantly different behavior results. Discrepancies which occur between achieved and ascribed status variables as a result of mobility have also been investigated, but again these studies fail to yield any conclusive findings (Bloombaum, 1964; Geschwender, 1967; Jackson, 1962; Leavy, 1968; Segal and Knoke, 1968; Simpson, 1968).

What this review of status inconsistency theory and research reveals, then, is that inquiry into this aspect of social stratification has yielded a wide array of research reports which are mainly in agreement that status inconsistency is an important and plausible explanation of the behavioral consequences of status ranking, especially in regard to political orientation. Yet, this literature also exhibits an inability to specify exactly how inconsistency

affects behavior.

This difficulty is exacerbated in the literature by another basic problem. Researchers are reluctant to pattern their studies after previously published reports. In an effort to further the generalizability of the theory, the basic premises on which status inconsistency is based have not been substantiated through adequate replication. For example, status inconsistency has been related to a wide variety of dependent variables, but when two studies using different dependent variables find different results, we cannot tell if the divergence is due to the choice of dependent variables or if it represents a refutation of the general concept being tested.

The problem of sorting out the contradictory results is further compounded by the fact that different methods have been employed in testing the effects of status inconsistency. On the one hand, Lenski's method (1964) of comparing the sums of the inconsistent cells with that of the consistent cells has usually resulted in the discovery of an inconsistency effect. However, studies using a regression approach have generally found little evidence to support the theory of status inconsistency (Broom and Jones, 1970; Treiman, 1966). Although the latter type of analysis seems more methodologically sound (Jackson and Curtis, 1972), it is not possible to determine the degree to which the results of studies on status inconsistency are contaminated by the type of analysis employed.

In an effort to come to grips with these problems, this study is a replication of one of the more recent research endeavors in this field, the study conducted by Broom and Jones (1970). In Finifter's terms, our study is a "virtual replication" of the work by Broom and Jones, that is, its goal is "... to repeat an original study not identically,

but rather 'for all practical purposes' to see if its results 'hold up' against chance and artifact" (Finifter, 1972: 121). The sample employed in this study is not the same but the measurement and analysis are practically identical to Broom and Jones',[1] the only difference being a slight variation in the computation of the inconsistency score. Broom and Jones ranked each respondent on the status variables in question and then took the standard deviation among these rankings as an indication of status inconsistency. In the present study, each respondent's score on the status variable is first converted into a standard score and then the standard deviation among the standard scores is used as an indication of status inconsistency.

DATA AND METHOD

In this research, a secondary analysis of a body of data originally collected by the Gallup organization is performed. The subjects represent a random sample of the rural population of Michigan. Because this is a rural sample, it contains a larger proportion of older persons than one would find in a sample of the entire population of the state. There is also a greater number of females in the sample than males. Although status inconsistency has usually been studied in urban areas, there is no reason to expect that the degree of inconsistency should be any different for rural than for urban residents. In fact, Goertzel (1970) presents evidence which supports the contention that the degree of inconsistency in rural areas is generally equal to that found in urban settings. This result is not surprising when one considers the rapidity with which differences between urban and rural life are disappearing. Moreover, many of the subjects have no direct connection with agriculture, but

only live in rural areas and this, as a result, additionally increases the similarity of their attitudes and those of urban residents.

The major variables in this study are occupation, education, income, religion, and political party preference. The first four variables are the status indicators upon which each respondent is scored, while the latter variable, political party preference, is the dependent variable. We hypothesize that status inconsistency increases one's political liberalism. Therefore, our prediction of Democratic party preference should be significantly better than when the measures of inconsistency in addition to the status variables are used as compared to when only the status indicators are applied.

The general status inconsistency score is developed in the following manner. First, each respondent's score on the education, occupation, and income hierarchies is converted to a standard score to make them comparable with one another. The standard deviation among these three scores is then computed for each individual. This figure is multiplied by ten to yield the status inconsistency score. A high score indicates a wide variation in scores on the three status variables and thus a high degree of status inconsistency. A low score indicates comparable values on the status indicators and thus a consistent individual. The range of status inconsistency scores is from one to twenty-four. In their earlier article, Broom and Jones (1970) reported a range of from zero to twenty-four in their inconsistency score.

The high investment-low reward variable includes people who have at least a high school diploma (high investment) and either earn less than $5000 per year or are in the low occupation status category (low reward). The low investment-high reward variable consists of persons

with an eighth grade education or less who are also in the highest income or occupation category.

The high ascribed-low achieved variable includes persons who are Protestants (high ascribed) and are in either the lowest education, occupation, or income category (low achieved). The low ascribed-high achieved variable consists of Catholics who are also either high school graduates or are in the highest categories of income or occupation.

The method used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses is taken from previous studies of the effects of status inconsistency (Broom and Jones, 1970; Jackson and Burke, 1965; Olsen and Tully, 1972; Treiman, 1966). In all of these reports, regression analysis with dummy variables is used to discern the effects of status inconsistency. The critical research question is not how much of the total variance in political party preference can be explained, but whether the equation including the inconsistency terms explains a significantly greater amount of the variance than the additive model (See: Jackson and Curtis, 1972: 702).

To develop the simple least-squares equation, each category of the status variables is first converted into a separate dummy variable. For example, the three categories of occupation: low, medium, and high, generate three dummy variables. If a respondent has a low status occupation, the dummy variable for that category takes on the value of one, while the other two dummy variables for occupation are set equal to zero. Each dummy variable is weighted by a separate regression coefficient. If the dummy variable equals zero, the result of multiplying it by its coefficient is zero and that term drops out of the prediction equation. If the dummy variable equals one, the result of multiplying it by its weight gives us the value of the coefficient. This term is added to the constant term, thus predicting the score on the dependent variable.

The simple additive model, then, predicts the dependent variable on the basis of the dummy variables for education, occupation, and income. However, if we include all nine of the dummy variables in the equation, the least-squares procedure breaks down (Suits, 1957). Therefore, it is necessary to "constrain" one dummy variable for each of the status variables used in the equation. In this research, the low category for each variable is constrained. This means that the equation includes six terms plus the constant; i.e., two dummy variables for each status. The effects of these constrained categories are collected in the constant term. The regression coefficients for the dummy variables can be interpreted as the influence of those categories over and above that of the constrained category. The numerical value of the coefficient for the medium class of occupation, for instance, represents the difference between being in this category as opposed to being in a low status job.

The value of R^2 for each equation indicates the amount of the variance in the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variables. The values of R^2 for two different equations can be compared by an F-test to determine if one of the equations explains a significantly greater amount of the variance than the other. To test for inconsistency, the R^2 from the simple additive equation is compared to the R^2 from an equation containing those terms, plus a term representing status inconsistency. If the latter equation explains a significantly greater amount of the variance, we conclude that status inconsistency does have an influence on the dependent variable, over and above that effect generated by the status variables.

At this point a brief comment on the problems associated with this method of analysis is in order. First, there is the difficulty of multicollinearity. Regression analysis encounters problems of interpretation when the intercorrelations among the independent variables are high.

However, as can be seen from Table I, this is not a problem because the intercorrelations among the independent variables are low. The high intercorrelations among the categories of a single variable are expected since they are mutually exclusive categories.

[Table I about here.]

A second problem arises because many of the variables used in this analysis are not measured on interval scales, a necessary condition for using regression analysis. However, this problem is effectively solved by using dummy variables (Cohen, 1968; Melichar, 1965; Suits, 1957; Tufte, 1969).

The third, and most crucial, difficulty concerns the identification problem (Blalock, 1966, 1967a, 1967b). When status inconsistency is defined and/or measured solely in terms of other independent variables, it is impossible to separate the inconsistency effect from that of the component independent variables. In other words, the inconsistency effect cannot be isolated by varying the inconsistency level, while holding the other independent variables constant. The degree of inconsistency is determined by the values of the independent variables; to vary one is to vary the other.

There are several ways of dealing with the identification problem. We could make some simplifying assumptions to further specify the model, setting some of the coefficients equal to zero. However, sound theoretical grounds for selecting which coefficients to delete are lacking. Alternatively, we might introduce additional exogenous variables into the model, resulting in a further specification which will make it possible for us to choose from among the sets of alternative coefficients. The problem here is not only theoretical justification but also, empirical

measurement (Jackson and Curtis, 1972). Another method of dealing with the identification problem is to compare the predictive ability of a purely additive model with that of a model which also contains an inconsistency or interaction term. If the more complex model does not explain a significantly greater amount of the variance in the dependent variable than the simple additive model, then there is little rationale for retaining the more complicated model. This latter method is the one employed in the present study.

HYPOTHESES

In keeping with the spirit of virtual replication, the same hypotheses that were tested by Broom and Jones are used (1970).

Hypothesis 1: Political liberalism is inversely related to achieved socioeconomic status.

As the subjects' rankings on the occupation, education and income hierarchies rise, the liberalism scores are expected to decline. The regression equation used to test this hypothesis is the simple additive model which predicts the value of the dependent variable from the scores on the status variables.

The regression coefficients employed to test this hypothesis are shown in column one of Table 2, along with the values of R and R^2 for this regression. This hypothesis is not confirmed by the data. The hypothesis would have been supported if all the coefficients in column one had negative signs and if the probability of voting Democratic had been less at each higher level of education, occupation, and income. However, in Table 2 the signs associated with the terms for income are positive, signifying an increase in the probability of voting Democratic rather

than a decrease. We do find, though, that respondents in the highest income category are less likely to vote liberal than those in the middle category, a trend in the predicted direction. This situation is reversed for occupation, as those in the highest status jobs are more likely to be Democratic than subjects in the middle category. This result is contrary to the expectations of the hypothesis. (See column one of Table 3 for a comparison with Broom and Jones' results). The R^2 for the equation shows us that these status indicators are able to account for only 3.2% of the variance in political preference. This percentage is not very large, but as noted above, the crucial question is how much we can improve on this by adding a term to represent status inconsistency.

[Tables 2 and 3 about here.]

Hypothesis 2: After controlling for the additive effects of the achieved statuses on political liberalism, status inconsistent individuals are more liberal than status consistent persons.

Broom and Jones' data fail to confirm this hypothesis. The amount of the residual variance which is explained by the inconsistency term is not significant. This hypothesis represents a test of the original Lenski formulation (1954) that states that any inconsistency is related to political liberalism. As noted earlier, previous research has failed to find conclusive empirical support for this type of hypothesis. The regression equation used to test the hypothesis includes all the terms present in the first equation, plus an interaction term to represent

the respondent's degree of status inconsistency.

The regression coefficients in column two of Table 2 are those used to test the second hypothesis. We can see that the only new term in this column is the one representing status inconsistency. The value of R^2 in column two is .041, as compared to .032 in the first column. (Compare this increase to that obtained by Broom and Jones in columns 1 and 2 of Table 3.) To determine if this increase in the amount of variance explained is significant we use the following formula (Cohen, 1968):

$$F = \frac{(R^2_{Y \cdot A,B} - R^2_{Y \cdot A}) / b}{(1-R^2_{Y \cdot A,B}) / (n-a-b-1)}$$

where,

a= the number of original independent variables

b= the number of added independent variables

$R^2_{Y \cdot A,B}$= the incremented R^2 based on a+b independent variables

$R^2_{Y \cdot A}$= the smaller R^2 based on only "a" independent variables

with,

degrees of freedom = b, and (n-a-b-1) respectively.

Using equation number one as the original equation and adding only one additional independent variable to represent status inconsistency, an F of 1.953 is obtained. The critical value of F at the .05 level of significance for degrees of freedom equal to 1 and ∞ is 3.84. The above value of F does not exceed this critical value and is therefore not significant.

The results of this test indicate that the inclusion of the status inconsistency term does not significantly increase the amount of variance

explained over the simple additive model. Therefore, status inconsistency defined in this general manner has no effect on political liberalism. This result refutes Lenski's early contention and concurs with the results of Brandmeyer (1965), Kelly and Chambliss (1966), Broom and Jones (1970), and Jackson and Curtis (1972).

> Hypothesis 3: After controlling for the additive effects of the achieved statuses, respondents with a high educational investment but low rewards will tend to be politically liberal.

> Hypothesis 4: After controlling for the additive effects of the achieved statuses, people with high rewards but low educational investment will tend to be politically conservative.

These two hypotheses attempt to discover if these specific patterns of inconsistency are related to political party preference. Previous research, discussed earlier, has indicated that a general definition of inconsistency may not suffice and that the effects of specific patterns of inconsistency should be investigated. Both hypotheses are tested through the same regression equation. It contains all the terms of the additive model, plus one term representing high investment-low reward inconsistency, and a different term for low investment-high reward individuals. Since in this case two terms are added to the additive model, we will look not only at the total increase in the amount of variance explained, but also determine the significance of each of the two coefficients individually.

The third column of Table 2 contains the regression coefficients from the equation used to test the third and fourth hypotheses. This equation includes terms for the three status variables and for the effects of high

investment-low reward, and low investment-high reward inconsistencies. As can be seen from Table 2, the coefficients for the latter two variables have negative signs. They decrease the probability of voting Democratic. This is a tendency in the predicted direction for the 14th term (low investment-high reward inconsistency), but in the opposite direction than hypothesized for the 13th term. In the Broom and Jones study, the signs associated with both these terms are in the opposite direction than predicted. (See column three, Table 3.)

To test the effects of these two types of inconsistencies collectively, we compare the R^2 from the third equation, .046, with that of the first equation, .032. Our formula yields an F-score of 1.628. The critical value of F at the .05 significance level with 2 and ∞ degrees of freedom is 2.99. Thus, the addition of these two terms does not significantly reduce the amount of variance unexplained.

We also wish to look at the 13th and 14th terms individually and determine their significance within equation number three. Neither term is significant beyond the levels of chance occurrence (P=.121 and .564, respectively). Therefore, inconsistencies between investments and rewards have no effect upon Democratic party preference.

> Hypothesis 5: After controlling for the additive effects of the achieved socioeconomic statuses, Catholics will be more liberal than non-Catholics.

This hypothesis does not say anything about status inconsistency. It attempts to show that an equation containing terms for occupation, education, income, and religion explains a significantly greater amount of the variance in voting behavior than an equation including terms for only the first three variables. The equation used to test this hypothesis

is an additive model and differs from equation number one only by including the independent effects of religion upon political liberalism.

The regression coefficients for this hypothesis are listed in column four of Table 2. The only difference between this equation and the first is the inclusion of the term for religious preference. Neither equation is a test of status inconsistency. The value of R^2 for column four is .087. When compared to the .032 value of R^2 in equation one we obtain an F-score of 13.27. The critical value of F with degrees of freedom equal to 1 and ∞ at the .001 level of significance is 10.83. Thus, including religion in the regression equation significantly increases the amount of variance explained and contributes to the understanding of political liberalism. This result concurs with the findings of Broom and Jones (see column four, Table 3) and justifies using religious preference in an equation predicting liberalism. The amount of variance explained is still small, 8.7%, but is significantly better than our prediction when only education, occupation, and income are used.

> Hypothesis 6: After controlling for the additive effects of the achieved statuses and of religion, Catholics with high achieved status are more liberal than other Catholics.

> Hypothesis 7: After controlling for the additive effects of the achieved statuses and of religion, Protestants with low achieved status are more liberal than other Protestants.

Like the second, third, and fourth hypotheses, these propositions represent an inconsistency effect. Since Catholicism is a low ascribed status, a Catholic with a high achieved status will presumably experience status inconsistency. Historically, Protestants have been considered

high on the ranking of religious preference. Therefore, when a Protestant holds a low socioeconomic status, an inconsistency between his achieved and ascribed status levels is present. According to the theory outlined previously, the result of this inconsistency between the achieved and ascribed statuses should be an increase in political liberalism.

The equation used to test these hypotheses contains terms for occupation, education, income, religion, inconsistent Catholics, and inconsistest Protestants. To determine the combined effects of these two types of inconsistencies we compare the R^2 from this equation to the R^2 from an equation including only the four status variables. The significance of the coefficient associated with each type of inconsistency is also computed so that their effects individually as well as collectively may be determined.

The sixth and seventh hypotheses are tested through the regression coefficients listed in the fifth column of Table 2. We are looking at the effects of achieved-ascribed inconsistencies in this case.

In addition to the two terms for achieved-ascribed inconsistencies, the fifth equation also includes the coefficients for education, occupation, income, and religion. To assess the significance of the inconsistency, the R^2 from the fifth equation, .088, is compared to that of the fourth equation, .087. The F-ratio for this comparison is .157, far below the critical value at the .05 level of 2.99. The status inconsistency terms do not explain more of the variance than the terms for the status variables. Nor are either of the coefficients for the inconsistency variables, taken individually, significant (P=.887 and .646, respectively). As a result, neither hypothesis six nor seven is supported.

These results conflict with Broom and Jones'. They found that Catholics with a high achieved status are significantly more liberal than other Catholics, but Protestants with a low achieved status are not more liberal than other Protestants. We found no inconsistency effect among Catholics with a high achieved status. In fact, the negative signs associated with the inconsistency terms in the fifth column reveal that these respondents are less likely to claim a preference for the Democratic party. As was the case with the high investment-low reward inconsistency, this tendency is in the opposite direction than hypothesized. In the Broom and Jones study, one of the ascribed-achieved inconsistency terms has a negative sign, but the other term indicates a relationship in the predicted direction. (See column five, Table 3.)

To conclude the analysis of the data we formulate a regression equation consisting of the terms for education, occupation, income, religion, investment-reward inconsistencies, and achieved-ascribed inconsistencies. (See column six, Table 2.) When this is compared to equation number four, which includes the first four variables listed above, we obtain an F-ratio of .561, well below the critical value of 3.32. Including all these specific types of inconsistencies does not help to explain political party preference. Our conclusion is that status inconsistency, as we have operationalized it, is not in any way related to liberal party preference.

DISCUSSION

The evidence presented in this study does not support the theory

of status inconsistency. Regardless of how status inconsistency is operationalized, the results are identical: no relationship occurs between status inconsistency and Democratic party preference. As previously stated, this non-confirmation is consistent with the findings of other research efforts. And equally consistent, we are forced to ask ourselves the following question: To what factors can we attribute the absence of empirical support for status inconsistency theory?

To answer this question two options are possible: (1) we can reject the theory outright and search for alternative explanations of political preferences; or (2) we can isolate particular problems within the basic formulation of the theory and suggest possible ways of overcoming them.

Olsen and Tully (1972) chose the first option. They maintain that status inconsistency should be discarded as an explanation of preferences for political change. Their study revealed that status inconsistency actually has no effect on most indicators of liberalism. Even in those cases where a relationship is discernible, the amount of variance explained is so small as to be inconsequential. Implicit in their rejection of the theory are the assumptions that the present theory is adequately formulated and, more importantly, that the primary research task is to explain a large percentage of the variance in preference for political change. Being unable to accomplish the latter, they abandon status inconsistency and suggest that we look for other variables to explain the phenomenon.

The results obtained in the present study are consistent with those Olsen and Tully presented. However, we adopt a more general orientation to the problem. It is our contention that the primary explanation for the contradictory results which characterize the literature on status inconsistency is deeply rooted in the basic formulations of the theory.

From its original introduction in sociology, status inconsistency theory has been plagued by incomplete and vague conceptualization. What is needed is not further research testing the traditional formulation of the theory, but rather additional theoretical work aimed at further specification of the theory and its underlying assumptions. Therefore, we agree with Zelditch and Anderson's assessment of the theory of status inconsistency: "Its assumptions have not been made explicit, the scope of the theory has not been clearly defined, several distinct processes have used the same name, and many portions of the theory . . . have not been thought out at all." (Zelditch and Anderson, 1966: 245-46).

There are at least two possible approaches to reformulating the theory of status inconsistency. One approach is social-psychologically based, while the other is social-structurally based. The former takes the individual as the unit of analysis and is concerned primarily with the processes involved in interpersonal relationships and how they relate to status inconsistency. The latter approach emphasizes structural arrangements and social-structural variables among aggregates and their effect upon status inconsistency. In this latter case, the unit of analysis might be a nation, a particular social system, a sub-culture, or perhaps even a small group.

The types of questions addressed by these two strategies are somewhat dissimilar, although there are some concepts and propositions which are applicable at both levels. The value of the two approaches is that in laying out the basic premises which need to be studied, the major gaps and failings of the traditional conceptualization of status inconsistency become readily apparent.

An example of the social psychological model is the work by Zelditch

and Anderson (1966). They describe several processes which are important for status inconsistency, but which have been largely ignored in past formulations of the theory. Especially important is their discussion of the comparison process and of insulation situations. At the heart of their argument is that not all inconsistencies among statuses result in feelings of stress within the individual. Only a few statuses are salient and the move to establish balance among the relevant ranks depends on some activating process. It is of prime importance, then, to establish the nature of this activating process. Zelditch and Anderson suggest that it is basically a comparison process. "Satisfaction with a given rank is relative satisfaction (or deprivation) established by comparison with others like oneself." (Zelditch and Anderson, 1966:250.) Without this comparison process, i.e., if a person doesn't compare himself with others, there is no basis for inconsistency or stress and a vacuous balance or an isolation situation ensues.

On the other hand, a person may compare himself only with others who are imbalanced in the same manner. In this case, there is still no basis for a feeling of status inconsistency. Zelditch and Anderson refer to this as an insulation situation. Thus, it is necessary for a person to compare himself to someone who is not imbalanced in a like manner before the strains of inconsistency will be felt. It should be noted, however, that while necessary, this is not also a sufficient condition for status inconsistency. The process of establishing balance among the ranks, a process in itself not well understood, will not be activated unless the comparison, however inconsistent, results in some relatively depriving or guilt-inducing state. Without going into a more complete explication of the remainder of their argument, it is

readily apparent that a more determined theory of status inconsistency cannot be achieved until the various comparison, activating, balancing, reference, and response processes are more fully understood. The fact that previous conceptualizations have not analyzed these processes adds strength to our contention that an adequate theory of status inconsistency has not yet been formulated.

Although work on a theory of status inconsistency which investigates structural variables is not yet extensive, there have been some seminal attempts made (Berger et al, 1972; Smith, 1969). However, we feel that a structural model of status inconsistency can best be attained by combining these previous approaches with concepts widely used in other areas of sociology.

In addition, much of our discussion may be relevant for a social-psychological model of status inconsistency. For example, implicit in Zelditch and Anderson's analysis of comparison processes is the idea that a person must be conscious of his inconsistency if it is to affect his behavior. This consciousness is raised through some types of comparison. However as Berger et al (1972) point out, this need not, in fact should not, be a local comparison. The reference group must be more general, e.g., an auto mechanic must compare himself to other auto mechanics in general, not to some other particular auto mechanic he may know.

Although this may seem to be only a slight variation on Zelditch and Anderson's insulation theme, it is important because it begins to direct our attention to society as a whole, or to social structural determinants of status inconsistency. Characteristics of societies play a major role through comparisons to generalized others in raising an individual's awareness of his status inconsistency. For example, the

consciousness of status inconsistency may vary directly with the degree of social change prevalent in a society. In a system beset with rapid changes, the incidence of relatively-depriving comparisons to generalized others will be greater or lesser than those in a stable society. In a changing society, new generalized others are created as old reference points are transformed or discarded. The units which were involved in past comparison processes may not be those which are most relevant in the present and future states of society. Depending on the content of the generalized other, comparison processes or insulation may be accelerated. If the former is true, consciousness of status inconsistency will increase. If insulation occurs, it will decrease. Hence, a social structural variable, the degree of change within the social system, holds considerable importance for the occurrence and effects of status inconsistency.

The emphasis on comparison and consciousness evidenced in the Zelditch and Anderson (1966) and Berger et al (1972) formulations is not entirely new in the literature on inconsistency. Kelly and Chambliss (1966) tapped these dimensions with their measure of perceived inconsistency. Their results were negative, however, and this seems to have discouraged further use of these types of measures by other researchers. It is our contention, nevertheless, that these concepts must be further refined and included in the theory of status inconsistency.

Another intriguing line of inquiry concerns the level of consciousness of status inconsistency and its activation. The theory of status inconsistency does not attempt to specify the factors which create an awareness of status imbalance. For example, is consciousness of status inconsistency needed before the effects in political action and preference are manifested? What factors, beside comparisons, might force a social

actor to become aware of inconsistency? Is there a threshold effect, and if there is one, how does it operate? Concerning the latter, it seems likely that a person can tolerate an awareness of a certain level of inconsistency. The important question becomes, then, what factors push inconsistency past the threshold of tolerance or lower the threshold so that an existing level of imbalance becomes intolerable? Possible answers to these types of threshold questions are suggested by Mazur (1973). He notes that in instances of stressful conflict thresholds of consciousness or tolerance of imbalances are likely to be surpassed. Therefore, the extant level of societal and interpersonal conflict needs to be included as a possible activating process.

Similarly, another important set of questions which has been largely neglected, but which is crucial for further specification of the theory, concerns the resolution of imbalances. On a societal level, status inconsistency may be resolved either through conflict or consensus-based neutralizations.

A conflict-based resolution of status inconsistency may occur, for example, when a stratum within a society becomes blocked by some legal or structural means from achieving an objective which it perceives that it deserves. In response, the stratum organizes in opposition to those who control the rewards in the system and those who are, from the blocked stratum's perspective, receiving undue benefits. A conflict ensues which may lead to a revolution restructuring the existing basis of stratification in the society and basic structural alignments or a coup d'etat. Barrington Moore's analysis of the rise of communism, democracy, and facism illustrates the shape and effects of such resolutions (1966).

A consensus model of ameliorating tension in a stratification system due to status imbalances has not been well formulated as yet. However, a number of questions that are relevant to such a model can be posited which will give us an indication of the nature of this type of approach. For example, can existing states of inconsistency among different strata become institutionalized and legitimized? Are there agreed upon avenues which are open to groups and individuals which reduce inconsistency? Do institutionalization and acceptable ways of alleviating imbalances hold in abeyance the effects of inconsistency or a person's awareness of imbalances? Is consensus a deactivation of the process of a growing collective consciousness or does it exacerbate perceived injustices? If levels of inconsistency are institutionalized, what factors can send them over the threshold into consciousness again?

Concerning this last question, it is likely that as achieved statuses become fixed through institutionalization, ascribed statuses increase in importance. In his study on status inconsistency and age, Smith (1969) noted that similar occurrences among the aged push an individual's inconsistency into a prominent place as a determinant of his behavior. The fixed nature of the achieved statuses results in a feeling of being blocked. This perception increases the saliency of any existing inconsistency because the means for removing imbalances are destroyed when avenues of achievement disappear. The heightened relevancy of the ascribed statuses makes those persons whose status discrepancy was previously overshadowed by the primacy of the achieved indicators much more aware of their imbalances. The inconsistency becomes more apparent because they are now evaluated on, or perhaps deferentially treated because of, a lower ranking on an ascribed indicator.

Critical to the development of this approach is a specification of the conditions under which a conflict-based or consensus-based resolution of imbalance would be most likely to appear. One condition which we feel is conducive to a consensus-based resolution is the existence of non-zero-sum conditions in a social system. In societies where power, privilege, and prestige are seen as expanding commodities or in which the demand for these items does not outstrip the supply available (Ilichman and Uphoff, 1971), those groups with large amounts of any or all of these items can assume a reformist stance by removing some or all of the imbalances of others without jeopardizing their positions as major power brokers. These advances, however, may be only token advances and achievements conceded to inconsistent groups by those who control the valued resources. For instance, although workers get small increases in wages and benefits periodically, they still must struggle with the basic problems that are inherent in the nature of being a wage laborer. The concessions granted them by the corporate sector only serve to keep inconsistency at a tolerable level.

In instances of zero-sum conditions, we would expect the competition for power, privilege, and prestige to create a conflict-based amelioration of status inconsistency. Here the wielders of scarce commodities do not share resources with upcoming groups, but rather are eventually replaced by them. On the social psychological level, Berger et al (1972) points out that a consensus is less likely to be achieved in a zero-sum game. For example, if a social actor's gain is at the expense of another person (zero-sum), that actor may not accept the rewards offered him. This reduces the possibility of reaching a consensus-based reduction. Periods of economic crisis with their attendant decrease

TABLE I

MATRIX OF CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS AMONG THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Low Educ.	Med. Educ.	High Educ.	Low Income	Med. Income	High Income	Low Occup.	Med. Occup.	High Occup.
Low Educ.	1.0								
Med. Educ.	-.53	1.0							
High Educ.	-.24	-.70	1.0						
Low Income	.27	-.15	-.06	1.0					
Med. Income	-.04	.16	-.15	-.03	1.0				
High Income	-.15	-.06	.20	-.31	-.75	1.0			
Low Occup.	.17	-.11	-.02	.07	.12	-.18	1.0		
Med. Occup.	.02	.17	-.18	-.03	.05	-.02	-.66	1.0	
High Occup.	-.18	-.08	.25	-.05	-.21	.25	-.36	-.46	1.0

TABLE 2

MULTIPLE REGRESSION SOLUTIONS FOR ESTIMATING THE PROBABILITY OF CLAIMING A PREFERENCE FOR THE DEMOGRATIC PARTY

Characteristic	Regression coefficients by column: 1	2	3	4	5	6
Education						
1. Low	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. Medium	-.003	.060	.039	.013	.023	.080
3. High	-.140	-.139	-.072	-.128	-.113	-.038
Occupation						
4. Low	*	*	*	*	*	*
5. Medium	-.100	-.073	-.173	-.096	-.101	-.131
6. High	-.032	-.057	-.120	-.025	-.030	-.068
Income						
7. Low	*	*	*	*	*	*
8. Medium	.103	.162	.049	.080	.077	.054
9. High	.008	.059	-.030	.028	.029	.013
Religion						
10. Protestant	-	-	-	*	*	*
11. Catholic	-	-	-	.265	.302	.314
Inconsistency Terms						
12. Status Inconsistency Score	-	.013	-	-	-	-
13. High Investment, Low Reward	-	-	-.171	-	-	-.154
14. Low Investment, High Reward	-	-	-.133	-	-	-.091

TABLE 2 (cont'd.)

Characteristic	Regression coefficients by column: 1	2	3	4	5	6
15. High Ascribed, Low Achieved	-	-	-	-	-.017	.060
16. Low Ascribed, High Achieved	-	-	-	-	-.068	-.048
Constant Term	.498	.305	.590	.414	.416	.407
Multiple R	.180	.202	.215	.294	.297	.310
Multiple R^2	.032	.041	.046	.087	.088	.096

* Constrained categories
\- Not included in this regression

TABLE 3

MULTIPLE REGRESSION SOLUTIONS FROM
BROOM AND JONES' STUDY

Characteristic	Regression coefficients by column: 1	2	3	4	5	6
Education						
1. Low	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. Medium	-.083	-.082	-.054	-.077	-.087	-.062
3. High	-.187	-.184	-.108	-.181	-.206	-.116
Occupation						
4. Unskilled	*	*	*	*	*	*
5. Skilled	-.025	-.029	-.032	-.024	-.030	-.045
6. Clerical	-.140	-.136	-.152	-.137	-.148	-.168
7. Managerial or Professional	-.260	-.249	-.289	-.250	-.261	-.301
Income						
8. Low	*	*	*	*	*	*
9. Medium	-.063	-.068	-.080	-.061	-.069	-.094
10. High	-.173	-.177	-.208	-.177	-.197	-.243
Religion						
11. Catholic	-	-	-	.123	.064	.053
Inconsistency Terms						
12. Status Inconsistency Score	-	-.004	-	-	-	-
13. High Investment, Low Reward	-	-	-.104	-	-	-.135
14. Low Investment, High Reward	-	-	.109	-	-	.106

TABLE 3 (cont'd.)

Characteristic	Regression coefficients by column: 1	2	3	4	5	6
15. High Ascribed, Low Achieved	-	-	-	-	-.025	-.043
16. Low Ascribed, High Achieved	-	-	-	-	.125	.143
Constant Term	.782	.805	.776	.751	.781	.793
Multiple R	.392	.393	.396	.405	.408	.412
Multiple R^2	.153	.154	.156	.164	.166	.169

* Constrained categories
- Not included in this regression

in possibility of advancement and rewards can be characterized as instances of societal conditions approaching a zero-sum condition (Ilchman and Uphoff, 1971:99-109). Periods of economic prosperity or boom, on the other hand, should encourage the development of consensus-based solutions to the problems of status inconsistency. However, they may also exacerbate tension by accelerating expectations beyond the system's ability to fulfill them (Gurr, 1970:46-56). These comments suggest, then, that the notion of political economy is crucial in examining status inconsistency phenomena.

In conclusion, we feel that the types of questions which we have raised in this paper must be addressed if the theory of status inconsistency is to become more determinant. The recurrent failure to verify the relationship of status inconsistency to political liberalism is due to a lack of understanding and specification of the basic processes involved. An adequate understanding cannot be achieved unless solutions to the types of questions we have raised are incorporated into the theory. Our discussion of the possible directions which revisions of the theory may take has been admittedly rather crude and we believe that these notions must be refined through further empirical research. However, we feel that further research along the lines suggested will be much more effective in establishing a more specified, determinant theory of status inconsistency than the past simplistic formulations.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Broom and Jones study was based on data gathered in a national sample of adult males in Australia. Because the data in this study are derived from the United States, our research can be viewed as being comparative in nature. Even though there is a difference in the party structure of the two nations, i.e., Australia has a three-party system and the United States has a two-party system, we are concerned, as were Broom and Jones, with the propensity towards political liberalism rather than particular party affiliations.

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